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GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Voluntary - Public

Date: 6/13/2019

GAIN Report Number: E19018

EU-28

Post: Brussels USEU

EU Environmental Footprint Initiative Enters Transition Phase

Report Categories:

Policy and Program Announcements

Approved By:

Jennifer Lappin

Prepared By:

Sophie Bolla

Report Highlights:

Since 2013, the European Commission has been developing methods for measuring product environmental footprints to harmonize national measures through the Product Environmental Footprint Initiative. In August 2019, the initiative will be entering its transition phase and the European Commission is soliciting stakeholders for the development of the new methodology.

General Information:

In 2013, wishing to harmonize methods for measuring product environmental footprints across all Member States (MS), the European Commission published a [Communication](#) on “Building the Single Market for Green Products - Facilitating better information on the environmental performance of products and organizations.” The aim was to harmonize existing measures to reduce costs for industries, reduce confusion among consumers about environmental information and increase comparability among products. The Communication established two methods to measure environmental performance throughout the lifecycle: the Product Environmental Footprint (PEF) and the Organization Environmental Footprint (OEF).

Following the publication of the Communication, the European Commission launched a testing period of the PEF and OEFs through pilot projects. Product Environmental Footprint Category Rules (PEFCRs) for feed, food and drink products were developed during three-year pilot programs (2013-2016). Each PEFCR contains a set of rules on how to measure the life cycle environmental performance of the product in scope. These PEFCRs include:

- [Beer](#)
- [Dairy](#)
- [Feed for food-producing animals](#)
- [Dry pasta](#)
- [Packed water](#)
- [Pet food \(dogs and cats\)](#)
- [Olive oil](#)
- [Wine](#)

Some pilot programs were not finalized such as the PEFCR for red meat as distributing the environmental impact between the different phases (breeding, slaughterhouse, retail...) was deemed to complex.

The pilot program phase ended between 2016 and 2018. More information on the final PEFCRs can be found on the European Commission’s website:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/smgp/PEFCR_OEFSR_en.htm

More information on the launch of the initiative can also be found in the following GAIN reports:

- [EU Environmental Footprint Initiative](#)
- [Final EU Public Consultation on Product Environmental Footprint](#)

The PEF’s Transition Phase

Following the end of the PEF pilot phase and before the new Commission sets out the priorities for the European Union for 2019-2024, the European Commission launched a transition phase for the PEF. The main aim of the transition phase is to provide a framework for monitoring the implementation of existing PEFCRs and OEFSRs. European and international stakeholders that are interested in joining or monitoring pilot projects can register as “stakeholders” on the European Commission’s dedicated [webpage](#). Instructions on how to register are available here:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/smgp/pdf/Wiki_reginstr.pdf

During this transition phase, sectors can also develop new PEFCRs/ OEFSRs. To that effect, the European Commission issued a call for volunteers for the development of new PEFCRs/ OEFSRs. The deadline for applications is August 26, 2019. More information can be found here:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/smgp/ef_transition.htm.

Staff at FAS Brussels are also available for any further questions on registration and application at aguseubrussels@usda.gov

What is next?

The European Commission still has not indicated if a legislative proposal on the Product Environmental Footprint and the Organization Environmental Footprint will be published in the near future.

Furthermore, the EU has not decided whether communicating the environmental performance of a product should remain voluntary or become mandatory. More information will likely become available when the next European Commission publishes its priorities for the next five-year period. This is expected for the end of 2019.